

## Antigua MP to visit T&T to study Carnival model

ANTIGUA and Barbuda Member of Parliament Kelvin 'Shugy' Simon is coming to Trinidad and Tobago to examine how the country's Carnival model could benefit Antiguan artists and help boost their economy. In an interview Simon told reporters that his primary focus would be on helping Antiguan artists better protect their intellectual property rights during the Carnival season.

"On the topic of intellectual property, I'm not an expert on that, but it's something that I'm willing to expose myself to, and also bring back the knowledge-if I can touch base with some of the key persons in the game, especially from the legal side," Simon said. "I want to gain knowledge and insights of how our artists here can benefit from that knowledge once they're willing to learn." Simon said establishing ties between Antiguan creatives and T&T intellectual property lawyers could strengthen protections and support for artists. In addition to intellectual property issues, Simon pointed to Trinidad's Carnival as a case study in how culture can function as a large-scale business, bringing in over 100,000 visitors a year.

"Trinidad Carnival is seen in Trinidad as a business. I mean, it's a big business for everybody. The economy looks forward to it. Every vendor looks forward to it and whatever business they're in on a yearly basis, because it's a time where they make money," he said.

Simon lauded Antigua's carnival as 'second to none,' but said enhanced marketing and more deliberate planning were needed to raise its international profile. "I never criticised Antigua carnival. Our carnival is second to none in this world. The difference is that a lot of marketing goes into their Carnival, and in fact, it's so big right now that the Carnival pretty much markets itself." Simon said he sees carnival becoming as powerful a draw for Antigua as the winter tourism season, both in visitor numbers and economic returns.

"We need to have more planes coming here for carnival. Carnival in Antigua needs to be like a tourist season in the summer. We're talking about bringing at least 50 to 100,000 people here every year," Simon said. "Every Airbnb should be full, every hotel should be full. People should be looking to rent out their homes to accommodate people." Simon said limited investment in cultural infrastructure has left Antigua and Barbuda without a central home for culture.

"When you look at how culture is managed here, the fact that we don't even have a home for culture after all these years-I mean, that says it all. The government is not really interested in investing in culture on that level," Simon said.

He said carnival should be understood not merely as entertainment, but as an expression of deep historical and cultural significance.

"It's the way that the slaves celebrated after they were free, you know, and all of us are products of slavery. It's our history-we can't erase it. It's what makes us who we are today as a people," Simon explained.

On regional cooperation, Simon proposed a Caricom-level approach to carnival development, including the creation of a board to support smaller countries in strengthening their carnival offerings.

Drawing on his four years living in Trinidad, he said T&T's Carnival success stemmed from deliberate planning and sustained investment in cultural education, beginning at the school level.

"I'll definitely continue to be passionate about it, because the stigma must be erased. It's more than just partying. It has a deeper meaning, but a lot of people just don't take the time to understand it," he said.